United Nations system CEB/2017/2

Chief Executives Board for Coordination

9 February 2018

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Second regular session of 2017
New York, 8 and 9 November 2017

Summary of deliberations

I. Introduction

1. The second regular session of 2017 of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), chaired by the Secretary-General, was held at the Greentree Foundation Estate, in Manhasset, New York, on 8 and 9 November 2017.

2. Held in retreat format, the session consisted of three segments on the following themes: (a) the state of the world; (b) the implications of frontier technologies on the work of the United Nations system; and (c) proposals by the Secretary-General on reform in the areas of management, peace and security, and repositioning of the United Nations development system. The Board also engaged with the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, his Special Adviser on Policy and his Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

3. The present summary highlights the main points raised during the session.

II. Segment 1: state of the world

4. The Secretary-General offered an analysis of political realities during the segment on the state of the world. Citing significant qualitative changes in the level of global threats that had occurred since the beginning of 2017, the Secretary-General framed his remarks by deliberating on how the United Nations system could be most helpful in addressing current challenges, while remaining mindful and clear-eyed about the changing power relations, increased volatility and the multiplication of crises.

5. The ensuing discussion touched on, among other issues, the setback in the non-proliferation regime and the risks this brings to peace and security in the Korean peninsula and beyond, the broadening nature of the Middle East crisis and its regional and interregional repercussions, and the acceleration of climate change.

6. On climate change, the Secretary-General called for enhanced ambition on all fronts (namely, financial support, adaptation and innovative forms of financing) and noted his intention of raising awareness about such issues at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Bonn, Germany.

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7. The Board's discussion also included an overview of the world economy, noting the year's positive performance and projected similar levels for 2018, but cautioning against becoming complacent and therefore unprepared for cyclical developments. Concern was also raised about the unintended consequences of prolonged low interest rates, the related debt crisis risk and increases in extreme poverty, despite positive overall trends in poverty reduction over the past years. Conflict, climate change and population growth were seen as being among the drivers of poverty.

8. The Board expressed its commitment to strengthening multilateralism, to showing leadership, even when solutions were not readily available and when human rights and the rule of law were in peril, and to not leaving young people behind. The members of the Board acknowledged the need to revisit the political and diplomatic strategies for engagement with the United Nations membership. The key role of international and regional cooperation in countering the latest trends and patterns in respect of organized crime and radicalized groups was underscored.

9. The Board further discussed the need to strengthen the links between humanitarian assistance and development in situations of protracted crisis, where sustainable development might not yet be viable. Noting that most conflicts are now internal to states, and not between them, new challenges were arising with regard to conflict prevention.

10. Strengthened communication efforts and a robust outreach strategy for engaging with various stakeholders would be crucial for boosting United Nations efforts to translate its messages and work, including as regards the ongoing reform efforts.

11. The Board benefited from the participation of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, who noted that half of the world's population was under the age of 30 and forcefully argued that investing in youth was a collective prerogative and an opportunity to prevent conflict and drive sustainable development and climate change action. The current generation of youth was the most technologically connected generation, but also the most vulnerable, and shared the values of the United Nations, including the importance of peace, equality and human dignity.

12. In reflecting on how the United Nations could better support young people and remain relevant to them, the Envoy noted that the Organization could play an important role as an unbiased convener of youth; a hub of resources — tools, knowledge, expertise; and a "multiplier for youth work". In concluding, the Envoy made the case that the United Nations needed to (a) recognize the shift towards a new kind of power, characterized by mass participation and peer coordination among youth, and help to consolidate the positive momentum for social good; (b) increase youth leadership in United Nations system organizations and retain young talent; and (c) "walk the talk" by enhancing coordination and resources for youth engagement at the global and country levels.

III. Segment 2: implications of frontier technologies for the work of the United Nations system

13. As a follow-up to the Board's April 2017 deliberations on global megatrends (see CEB/2017/1), the Secretary-General asked members to examine the opportunities and challenges of frontier technologies — with a focus on artificial intelligence, cyberspace, biotechnology and new weaponry — in order to identify specific entry points for United Nations system engagement.

14. The Board members recognized that the frontier technologies were each distinct yet interlinked, with shared characteristics, such as the unprecedented speed of progress, their transformative yet disruptive potential, serious ethical and human

rights concerns, and an absence of adequate normative and regulatory frameworks to guide their ethical development and use. An integrated multi-disciplinary approach was necessary and would require United Nations system-wide engagement on the basis of on strategic coherence, common positioning and coordinated action across all pillars of United Nations work.

15. Building on the presentations on digital governance and network theory delivered by prominent experts and informed by a working discussion paper, as well as the focused analyses contributed through the High-Level Committee on Programmes, Board members saw the United Nations system as contributing towards building greater shared knowledge and understanding of both the opportunities and threats these technologies present, as well as towards maximizing the social benefits and minimizing the risks and destabilizing impacts thereof. The Board agreed that the United Nations system, in line with its important normative and thought leadership role deriving from the Charter, was uniquely placed to serve as an "ethical voice" and the "moral compass" to safeguard universal values, norms and standards and ensure that no one is left behind. The role of the Secretary-General as a visible and influential advocate was highlighted. Members also saw the need for United Nations system entities to significantly improve communications in order to more effectively shape public understanding of the risks and opportunities associated with such technologies and to foster broad support for universal norms.

16. It was also noted that the nature and level of United Nations engagement depended on the phase of a technology's development and the risks associated therewith. Care should be taken not to stifle nascent technologies, but rather to remind innovators of ethical considerations and of existing principles and applicable instruments that might provide relevant guidance. In cases where an emerging technology posed a clear existential threat, it was believed that particular urgency was required as regards the United Nations facilitating consultation and commitment among actors. In cases of policy disagreement among Member States, the United Nations could provide expert knowledge and support consensus-building on incremental issues.

17. Given the important and growing role of non-state actors in the creation and application of frontier technologies, the Board underscored the value and strength of the United Nations in facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue as an impartial broker and in providing a neutral platform to drive towards broad-based commitment to ethical principles in developing and deploying frontier technologies. Private sector entities (as the driving force behind many of the technologies) and youth (as early adopters and, often, instigators of innovation) were two groups that were seen as particularly important to engage with through multi-stakeholder processes. Board members widely supported convening an advisory panel or group of experts, with membership from industry, academia and scientific communities, so as to better inform the Secretary-General's engagement on these issues.

18. The Board also acknowledged that harnessing the benefits of innovative technologies was essential to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and must be integrated across United Nations efforts to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Collaboration across institutional boundaries was seen as critical to sharing experience and solving cross-sectoral problems. United Nations system entities were well placed to bring together internal and external expertise in order to pilot innovative technologies, support capacity-building and help Member States adopt best practices. The importance of ensuring that new technologies did not exacerbate inequalities was strongly stressed. The marginalization of countries with low technological capabilities, in particular the least developed countries, was seen as a significant risk. At the same time, these countries stood to gain the most from leapfrogging directly to advanced technologies and, in

this context, the importance of the United Nations system's capacity-building function was stressed.

19. Board members further recognized that frontier technologies should be applied to business processes so as to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of system organizations' programme delivery and that such technologies were likely to have significant implications for internal management practices.

20. At the conclusion of the segment, the **Secretary-General proposed and the Board agreed to develop a road map for further United Nations engagement on frontier technologies that included both external engagement on, and the internal application of, these technologies.**

21. The external engagement was envisioned as consisting of activities led by the Secretary-General, including: high-level advocacy and the possible convening of a high-level panel of experts, in consultation with Member States; a system-wide "deep dive" policy and programme analysis regarding the impact of frontier technologies for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, continuing under the auspices of the High-Level Committee on Programmes; and a plan to support Member States' efforts to address the implications of emerging technologies on peace and security. United Nations system entities would continue their work with relevant stakeholders to help shape norms and guide the ethical development and application of frontier technologies within their existing mandates and fields of expertise.

22. Efforts to boost the internal application of frontier technologies could include initiatives led by the Secretary-General on mainstreaming innovation to improve business practices and active engagement with a system-wide innovation network, through the High-Level Committee on Management and High-Level Committee on Programmes.

IV. Segment 3: proposals by the Secretary-General on reform in the areas of management, peace and security and the repositioning of the United Nations development system

23. The deliberations of CEB on the topic of United Nations reform focused on the series of proposals for institutional change recently put forward to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations. The Board's discussion was informed by presentations on the repositioning of the United Nations development system; on the management reform proposals; and on the reform of the peace and security architecture. The Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Policy briefed CEB on the gender parity strategy, and the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse briefed the Board on the new approach to combating sexual exploitation and abuse.

24. In opening the discussion, the Secretary-General provided an overview of the various ongoing reform strands and their interlinkages. The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development required that the United Nations system address a wide range of issues across the pillars of the Charter. Promoting sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian affairs was closely linked to making progress on the conflict prevention and sustaining peace agenda, and vice versa. The overall objective of United Nations reform was to enhance the capacities and create the conditions for all entities of the United Nations system, operating across all mandates, to be able to more effectively cooperate and deliver results on the ground in support of Member States' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. The right institutional mechanisms, structures and tools were needed to facilitate greater

convergence across management, peace and security and the operational activities of the United Nations system.

25. In addition, the Secretary-General emphasized the need for greater clarity on the roles of the different inter-agency coordination mechanisms so as to avoid overlap and duplication in their functions. He noted that system-wide policy coherence and coordination on programmatic and management matters were the responsibility of the Board's High-Level Committee on Programmes and High-Level Committee on Management, while the United Nations Development Group essentially had an operational support role at the country level. The responsibility of CEB for providing high-level system-wide strategic guidance needed to be preserved, while leaving questions of operations and implementation to other bodies. **Subsequently, the Secretary-General proposed, and the Board agreed, to separate the system-wide programmatic and management policy roles (High-Level Committee on Programmes and High-Level Committee on Management) from operational support (United Nations Development Group), with the United Nations Development Group being outside of the architecture of CEB.**

26. The Secretary-General also highlighted three issues that deserved maximum attention and commitment from the entire leadership of the United Nations: (a) promoting gender parity; (b) combating sexual exploitation and abuse; and (c) addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system. On the last point, he advised the Board that a **CEB Task Force on sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system was being established, under the leadership of the Chair of the High-Level Committee on Management, in order to address the issue in depth.** Specifically, the Task Force would focus on reviewing organizations' policies for addressing sexual harassment, their capacities for the investigation of allegations and support to victims, with a view to identifying gaps and inconsistencies as well as best practices, and thereby to developing a common United Nations system approach.

Repositioning of the United Nations development system

27. Turning the Board's attention to the issue of United Nations development system reform, an overview was provided regarding the preparation of the follow-up report of the Secretary-General on the repositioning the United Nations development system. Preparations were well advanced and consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders continued. The report (A/72/684-E/2018/7) would be considered by the Economic and Social Council at its operational activities segment, in February 2018, and by the General Assembly thereafter.

28. The report would focus on a number of issues critical for enhancing the United Nations development system's capacity to deliver system-wide results in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It would include the system-wide strategic document mandated by the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, as well as proposals for: improving the resident coordinator system; strengthening coordination among United Nations Country Teams; fostering a more cohesive regional approach; and developing more effective governance and accountability mechanisms and a funding compact to make funding more predictable so as to better support collective actions and results.

Management reform

29. The proposal for a new management paradigm, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/72/492), was also brought to the

attention of CEB. The report was being reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

30. The reform proposals focused on cultural transformation and strengthened leadership, improved transparency and accountability, delegation of authority to the point of delivery and changes in organizational design, by forming two departments with separate policy and operational support functions. If approved by Member States and implemented, the new paradigm was expected to empower managers to determine how best to use their resources in order to support programme delivery and mandate implementation, as well as hold them accountable for the performance of their programmes, including financial performance. Simplifying human resources management and streamlining the planning and budgeting process were other key components of the proposal.

Restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar

31. A presentation outlining the main elements of the Secretary-General's proposal for the restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar (A/72/525) focused on proposed changes to the organizational structure of the peace and security pillar of the United Nations. Those changes were geared towards prioritizing conflict prevention and sustaining peace, enhancing the pillar's effectiveness and coherence and strengthening its linkages with the development and human rights pillars. The proposal foresaw the creation of a Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, combining the responsibilities of the current Department of Political Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office, and a Department of Peace Operations. Shared regional structures would be responsible for developing integrated strategies and approaches for conflict prevention, crisis response and sustaining peace in their respective regions.

Gender parity strategy

32. The Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Policy provided an update on the gender parity strategy, recalling that the strategy had been launched by the Secretary-General on 12 September 2017, following a wide consultative process involving most of the Board's membership. In the strategy, the Secretary-General pledged to reach parity at the senior leadership level by 2021 and parity across the entire United Nations system by 2028. In addition to setting concrete performance targets, the strategy called for greater system-wide collaboration and information-sharing in recruitment and the utilization of joint databases and platforms for real-time information on the composition of staff as regards gender balance and geographic distribution. While the strategy served as an overarching framework towards gender parity, its implementation was the responsibility of each individual entity. Monitoring progress in implementation was key to the strategy's success.

33. Coordination, support and monitoring of the implementation of the strategy for non-Secretariat entities would be performed by UN-Women, while the Senior Adviser on Policy would be leading implementation within the Secretariat. Reporting, in particular quantitative reporting, would also be carried out by UN-Women, using system-wide CEB statistics. The Human Resources Network of CEB would handle all tasks related to the further definition of good practices in relation to human resources or of potential inter-agency programmes, such as talent management initiatives.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

34. Noting that addressing sexual exploitation and abuse in a comprehensive manner was one of the Secretary-General's top priorities since taking office, his Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual

Exploitation and Abuse summarized the four main elements of the Secretary-General's new approach, as outlined in his report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/71/818). Those measures included steps to: (a) elevate the voice of victims and put their rights and dignity at the forefront of United Nations efforts; (b) end impunity for those guilty of sexual exploitation and abuse; (c) build a truly multi-stakeholder network to support United Nations efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse; and (d) reorient the Organization's approach to strategic communications so as to raise awareness worldwide regarding the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse.

35. As part of the new approach, the Department of Management would work with all offices, departments, funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system to implement the new standards across all applicable policies and procedures, including advertising, recruiting and hiring for every position, and with respect to staff retention.

36. The Secretary-General stated unequivocally that all CEB members had a personal responsibility to prevent and respond to acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. Each head of organization was personally accountable for ensuring that: (a) there was no gap in the reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations; (b) every effort had been made to investigate each report of abuse; and (c) all members of personnel were trained in the United Nations Code of Conduct and the policy on the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Discussion

37. Following the presentations, Executive Heads shared their perspectives regarding the United Nations reform proposals. Salient features of the debate included:

(a) Robust support for the Secretary-General's United Nations reform efforts and acknowledgement of the unique opportunity to advance a visionary and ambitious agenda for change;

(b) Broad agreement that the integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development required a focus on the country-level delivery of collective results across the pillars of the United Nations mandate;

(c) The importance of effective messaging to communicate the common vision, mission and priorities for a United Nations that was fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century, with an emphasis on communicating the impact and benefits of the proposed changes for the people served by the United Nations;

(d) An acknowledgement that outreach and consultations, including with United Nations leadership and staff, were essential components for motivating and energizing internal stakeholders, who would be instrumental in implementing the necessary changes throughout the Organization;

(e) A recognition that the institutional diversity of the United Nations system was also its strength, requiring a practical and flexible approach that encompassed a variety of business models and practices and drew on the system's complementary expertise;

(f) Strong support for a variety of reform proposals, including a revitalized resident coordinator system, enhanced accountability and performance management, improvements in staff profiling and recruitment, the delegation of authority and application of the principle of subsidiarity, and for making funding for the United Nations development system more stable and predictable;

(g) A firm commitment to the implementation of the gender parity strategy and the approach for combating sexual exploitation and abuse.

Conclusion

38. Noting the magnitude and importance of the task of reforming the United Nations system to deliver collectively, with enabling funding, through impartial leadership, streamlined organizational arrangements and enhanced accountability for system-wide results, the Secretary-General expressed appreciation for the support conveyed by CEB members and for their useful observations and inputs.

39. The Secretary-General, in his concluding remarks, acknowledged the importance of speaking in a language that could be understood by the people the United Nations was mandated to serve. More efforts were needed by all United Nations system entities to enhance their capacity to communicate in common language. He closed the segment by proposing **to establish an inter-agency communications task team, to be led by the Department of Public Information, to make some concrete recommendations on communicating effectively with a variety of audiences.**

V. Other matters

A. Endorsement of documents

40. In advance of the session, the Board had electronically endorsed the following documents:

(a) Summary of conclusions of the High-level Committee on Management at its thirty-fourth session (28 and 29 September 2017) (CEB/2017/5);

(b) Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes at its thirty-fourth session (26 and 27 September 2017) (CEB/2017/6).

41. The Board also endorsed the analytical framework on risk and resilience (see CEB/2017/6, annex III). The Secretary-General encouraged relevant inter-agency mechanisms and communities in specific sectors or pillars to make effective use of the framework, which was developed by the High-Level Committee on Programmes through an 18-month consultation process, led by the World Food Programme, as an input to inform and guide the risk and resilience efforts of system entities in a coherent manner. The framework sought to advance a harmonized understanding among actors working in the areas of sustainable development, humanitarian, peace and security, and human rights, of the concepts of risk, prevention and resilience, and on the basis of such an understanding, to promote coherent and holistic analysis and joint planning. As such, it should be seen as a building block for a broader United Nations system-wide initiative on resilience. As recommended by the High-Level Committee on Programmes, further steps should now focus on translating that conceptual work into practice on the ground so as to strengthen risk-informed, prevention-oriented and integrated planning and action in support of the 2030 Agenda.

42. As a concrete follow-on in the area of climate action, and given the imperative of forging and strengthen coherence among several competing global and United Nations-led frameworks on resilience, **the Secretary-General requested the climate principals, through the existing drafting group on resilience, to convert the analytical framework into draft operational guidelines for approval by the United Nations Development Group and implementation by United Nations country teams on the ground. The drafting group's work was to be completed by 31 March 2018 and should build on existing initiatives, inter alia, the High-Level**

Committee on Programmes' analytical framework on risk and resilience; the United Nations Climate Resilience Initiative: Anticipate, Absorb, Reshape; the Blueprint for Action on El Niño; and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; and should focus on identifying operational policies, practical tools and guidance that country teams can use at the national level.

B. Tribute to Board members

43. On behalf of the Board, the Secretary-General paid homage to the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, Babatunde Osotimehin, who had passed away suddenly in June 2017, a few short weeks after attending the Board's last session. The Secretary-General described the late Executive Director as a great champion of health and well-being for all, throughout his career, and emphasized that the work of the Fund had greatly benefited from his forceful advocacy for the world's women and girls. His invaluable voice and insights would be sorely missed by many, including his CEB colleagues.

44. The Secretary-General also paid tribute to the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Irina Bokova, the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, Taleb Rifai, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Joan Clos, who were attending their final session of the Board; and to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Anthony Lake, who would be leaving at the end of 2017 and had been unable to attend the session.

C. Dates and venue for the forthcoming session

45. Board members were reminded of the dates of the first regular session for 2018, to be held on 3 and 4 May 2018 and to be hosted by the International Maritime Organization in London.